The Events on World Day Against Child Labour organised in Vietnam
June 2004

As of 2002, the ILO has designated 12th June as World Day for the Prevention of Child Labour and the event is celebrated in ILO Offices across the world with a view to calling attention to the plight of child workers everywhere. The event this year focussed on child domestic labour. While this does not appear to be a problem of the same magnitude in Vietnam as elsewhere in Asia, there are indications that it can grow as the country moves more firmly towards a market economy and existing support structures for working parents breaks down. Rural underemployment also constitutes a push factor and increasing rural-urban migration facilitates the process as networks and communication intensify and as transport improves. Vietnam’s attitude towards child labour is one which stresses prevention and events such as this one are important elements of the country’s advocacy campaigns against child labour.

To respond the World Day Against Child Labour, in Vietnam, with the financial and technical support from the ILO, the following activities have been conducted:

1. On 11 June a radio broadcast on the discussion of the child labour issues in Vietnam in general and child domestic in particular was sponsored by the ILO on the Voice of Vietnam, a very powerful radio station with a country-wide reach. The live broadcast was timed to coincide with the lunch break to ensure that it reached the widest possible audience. It was re-broadcast at 4 p.m., also considered prime time. In addition to the Director of the ILO Hanoi office, the other participants were the senior officials of the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs and the CPFC. Pre-taped interviews were made with child domestic workers and included into the programme.

2. On the next date of 12 June, an advocacy meeting for around 500 people was organized at the HCMC Opera House by the local branch of the Vietnam Women’s Union with a view to calling attention to the dangers of child labour in general and child domestic labour in particular. We have been informed that it was the first such meeting organized on this theme in HCMC and that it had attracted considerable interest from various sectors and from the general public and from the mass media some of whom were attracted by the banners outside the site of the meeting. The VWU is one of the ILO-IPEC’s partner organization in its work on child labour.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the People’s Council, the People’s Committee, local branches of the Committee for Population, Family and Children, the People’s Mobilization Committee, the Department of Labour, the Department of Education and Training and the various mass organizations. Working children and their parents were also present, as were NGO’s and other bodies dedicated to the rehabilitation of former child labourers. A short children’s concert dedicated to the theme of the rights to the child and to peace preceded the more formal event. Nineteen newspapers and several television channels covered the event.
The ILO also supported the design and printing of 5,000 copies of a leaflet (based on ILO materials on the issue) for distribution at this event and elsewhere.

ILO officials present included: Ms. RoseMarie Greve - the Director of the ILO Hanoi Office, Ms. Thetis Mangahas - the CTA of the Mekong Sub-regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women, Ms. Eriko Kujchi - Project Officer of the ILO-IPEC SRO, and other NPM/NPC/PC of the ILO-IPEC projects in Vietnam.

The Director of the ILO Hanoi office delivered a speech covering the history of the ILO’s involvement with this issue and the history of the World Day itself. She drew attention to the plight of child domestic workers and particularly to the need for better information on their numbers and the conditions under which they work and stressed the importance of a wide network of actors if the issue was to be successfully addressed.

Other speakers represented the People’s Committee, the Committee for Population, Family and Children, Department for Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, and the Women’s Union. A child worker residing in an Open House in District 6 of HCMC also spoke of her situation and that of her fellow workers.